

F.C.C. HEARINGS CONCERNING
MEDIA CONSOLIDATION

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Remarks by
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My name is Tracey Edmonds, and I'm a producer of television, film and music. The story I'd like to share with you concerns the radio industry, but its impact is relevant to all media that utilize the public airwaves for broadcasting.

I was largely unaware of the dangers of corporate consolidation within the media until about two years ago. At that time, my then-husband and I put together what we hoped would be an important public service project. We gathered together over thirty of the most respected artists in hip-hop and R&B and recorded a song that encouraged listeners to take part in our democracy and vote on election day. Every one involved volunteered their services, and the song itself was explicitly non-partisan—its only focus was to encourage a sense of citizenship and a belief in the importance of participatory democracy.

In some ways, the song was a success. For instance, the song proved so popular with the public that it became the number one video on MTV.

However, when we tried to promote the song via radio—which is still the primary platform where we reach our audience—we ran into surprising difficulties. Not long after the song debuted on the air, it was pulled from the playlists. When we asked programmers why, we were told that executives at the highest levels of station ownership had directed that the song not be played.

Now if this were the case in a single market, with a single, independently-owned station, it would not be a problem. But this directive came from the top of a corporation that owns over a thousand stations across the country, and is particularly dominant in the popular music sector. Thanks to this single corporate directive, this song effectively vanished from the airwaves.

Furthermore, we were told (off the record, of course) that this decision was political: the company feared that our audience, if moved to vote, would likely support a different candidate than its executives' personal preference.

In short, we tried to use the public airwaves to encourage the public to take part in the public life of our country. This effort was blocked by a handful of

private corporate executives in order to further a personal political agenda. If this Commission is genuinely concerned for the public welfare, I urge the Commissioners to take a hard look at the real effects of media consolidation, and consider who actually benefits from these regulations, and whose interests are left behind.